

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Virgil and Doris Childress House

**OWNERS:** John Thomas and Linda Laurent Thomas

**APPLICANTS:** Same as Owners

**LOCATION:** 3239 Locke Lane - River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** III.A

**HPO FILE NO:** 13L288

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Oct-15-2013

**HAHC HEARING:** Nov-07-2013

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 2, Block 24, River Oaks Sec. 4, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Virgil and Doris Childress House at 3239 Locke Lane was designed by architect Hermon Lloyd of the firm Moore & Lloyd in 1936 for Virgil and Doris Childress. In 1934, Harvin Moore and Hermon Lloyd formed the firm of Moore & Lloyd. During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. Virgil was an attorney and Doris was an artist and artist representative. She lived in the home until her death in 2001.

The Virgil and Doris Childress House is unique for River Oaks because of its Modernistic design. The two-story stucco house was the first of its type in the neighborhood and only the second residential Moderne home in the City. The Virgil and Doris Childress House at 3239 Locke Lane meets criteria 1, 4, 5, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *Virgil and Doris Childress*

Virgil Childress was born in Vashti, Clay County, Texas on February 9, 1904. He was the son of a carpenter. He received a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in 1926 and a degree in Law in 1928 from the University of Texas. He was very involved with the Commerce Club, Beta Sigma Gamma, and was a President of his class for the BBA in 1925 and he was a member of Delta Theta Phi. He was also a reporter for the *Texan* and the business manager for the *Law Review*. By 1929, he was practicing law in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Doris Childress was born in Celina, Texas, on June 29, 1909, the daughter of William and Una Robinson. Her father was a cotton broker. She attended Miss Aunspaugh's Art School in Dallas, Sophie Newcomb College, the CIA (now Texas Women's University), and the Chicago Art Institute. Doris was a life-long artist.

Virgil and Doris were married in 1933. At the time, they lived in Wichita Falls, where Virgil was an attorney and Doris taught art. They moved to Boston for Virgil to study law at Harvard University. They moved to Houston in 1935, and Virgil started the firm Lawler, Wood, and Childress.

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Virgil entered the US Naval Reserve in 1942, taking a leave from his law practice. He spent three years in air combat intelligence as a Lieutenant Commander and was awarded the Bronze Star. When he returned from duty, he founded a new law firm - Childress, Port, and Crady. Over the years, Virgil was a President of the Business and Estate Planning Council of Houston, a Director of the Houston Bar Association, and a Fellow of the American College of Probate Counsel.

Doris founded the Associated Artists in 1939; this became the Art Institute of Houston in 1948. Among her numerous accomplishments, she had a ceramic piece placed in the Houston Ceramic Show in Dallas in 1945. Doris specialized in painting historical sites, including many in Texas. She served on the Board of the Museum of Fine Arts, the Watercolor Society of Houston, and the Briar Club, among other organizations, throughout her life. Doris Childress and Eleanor McDaniel also started The Dance Club in 1939. The Childresses were members of First Presbyterian Church.

Virgil Childress died on September 16, 1990. Doris Childress died on December 12, 2001. They lived in the home until their deaths.

The current owners purchased the home from the Estate of Doris Childress in 2002. Several pieces of Doris's personal art collection remain in the house.

## *Moore & Lloyd*

While the firm of Moore & Lloyd built 3239 Locke Lane, Hermon Lloyd designed the house. Harvin Moore's architectural papers are kept in the Houston Public Library, where the original plans for the home remain.

Harvin Moore was born in Carmona, Texas, in 1905. He graduated from Central High School in 1923 and began college at Rice Institute. He graduated "with distinction" and intended to go to medical school. After a brief stint in medical school, Moore reentered Rice to study architecture and received his BS in Architecture in 1930.

Hermon Lloyd was born in Houston on October 9, 1909. His father, a notary public and a manager at an insurance firm, died in 1919, and his mother became a clerk. Hermon was brought up in a house with his mother, sister and grandmother. He attended Rice University and graduated with a B.S. in Architecture in 1931.

Upon graduation, construction was slow due to the depression and Moore teamed up with Hermon Lloyd to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together, and in 1934, they formed the firm of Moore & Lloyd. They were first located in the Citizen's State Bank Building downtown. Several years later, they designed a building at 2006 West Alabama which became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. According to son Barry Moore, in his introduction to the book, "Moore and Lloyd were soon very popular and very busy. The reputation of the firm rested largely on their works in River Oaks."

The firm's work continually increased during the 1930s. The commercial work was often for the same clients as their residential designs. The residences were usually traditional in style and the commercial buildings were more "Moderne." Barry Moore attributes this dichotomy to the fact that clients wished to appear "progressive in business and traditional in family values."

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During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. By the end of the 1930s, Moore and Lloyd began to move in different directions and, by the entry of the U.S. into World War II, the firm had dissolved. The catalogue of Moore and Lloyd works put together by Michael Wilson for the Houston Public Library is extensive.

A selection of their River Oaks homes includes:

### *City Landmarks:*

- 2404 Brentwood Drive, 1936
- 3379 Inwood, 1937
- 2440 Inwood Drive, 1937
- 2132 Troon Road, 1936
- 3412 Piping Rock Lane, 1939
- 3404 Piping Rock Lane, 1941
- 3405 Piping Rock Lane, 1941
- 1903 Olympia, 1941

### *1934:*

- 2228 Del Monte Drive (demolished)
- 3310 Del Monte Drive

### *1935:*

- 1927 Bellmeade Road (demolished)
- 2125 Bellmeade Road
- 2940 Chevy Chase
- 3257 Ella Lee (demolished)
- 1558 Kirby Drive
- 1839 Kirby Drive (demolished),
- 2117 Looscan Lane (demolished)
- 2148 Looscan Lane
- 2133 Pine Valley Drive
- 1112 Shepherd Drive

### *1936:*

- 2022 Chilton Road (demolished),
- 2036 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 2137 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 2216 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 1537 Kirby Drive

- 3239 Locke Lane
- 2129 Looscan Lane
- 2136 Pelham Drive

### *1937:*

- 5 Briarwood Court
- 3215 Ella Lee
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (demolished)
- 1801 Sharp Place
- 3068 Reba

### *1938:*

- 7 Briarwood Court
- 2327 Claremont Lane (demolished)
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane
- 1910 Kirby Drive (demolished)

### *1939:*

- 2057 Claremont Lane
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (demolished)
- 1909 Olympia Drive
- 3413 Piping Rock Lane

### *1940:*

- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (demolished)
- 2033 Claremont Lane
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (demolished),
- 3225 Reba Drive
- 1665 Willowick (demolished)

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The home at 3239 Locke Lane is unique for River Oaks because of its Modernistic design; it was the first of its type in the neighborhood and only the second residential Moderne home in the

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City. The design of the home was the work of Hermon Lloyd, who also designed a modern addition to the rear of the home in the 1960s.

3239 Locke Lane is a 2,655 square feet, two-story home on an 8,775 square foot lot, sited facing North. The house is faced in stucco and features a low pitched roof.

The house has two parts, a one-story wing to the east and a two-story main block. Moving east to west the one-story wing encloses a sunroom with a tri-part window on the east elevation. The window features two divided lite casement windows and a center multi-lite glass block window. The one-story wing features four divided lite casement windows on the north elevation. The windows are covered by a flat roof overhang that wraps from the east elevation to the north elevation and also features a balcony above.

The one-story wing curves around part of the two-story block and covers the front entry. Between the entry and the sunroom is a vertical 4 lite metal casement window with a small shed roof overhang. The front entrance is centered on the two-story block and features elaborate glass and wood double entry doors with glass block side lites; Moore & Lloyd used similar doors for the 1940 Hamman Exploration Company's headquarters at 2131 San Felipe Road. The west elevation features a side entry with a metal screen.

The second story of the main block features a divided lite casement window with a shed roof overhang on the east elevation. The northeast corner features five 4 lite casement windows that wrap the corner and features a shed roof overhang. The north elevation features a screened entry door to the balcony. The northwest corner features a 12 lite and 6 lite fixed window that wraps the corner. The corner windows feature a flat roof overhang.

The original rear garage was constructed in 1960 by Herman Lloyd and a carport was added. The original windows have been replaced due to deterioration. The existing windows are divided lite metal casement windows that match the original windows.

The current owners have thoughtfully preserved the home, and even preserved many of the original landscaping and garden features. The house has been sensitively maintained and is in excellent condition.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

"Doris Childress," *Houston Chronicle*, December 15, 2001.

Wilson, Michael E., Editor. *Harvin C. Moore: Houston Architect*, Houston Public Library, 1987.

Houston City Directories

Various resources from Ancestry.com

"Virgil Childress," *Houston Chronicle*, September 17, 1990.

*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Erin Glennon, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*



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## EXHIBIT A

VIRGIL AND DORIS CHILDRESS HOUSE

3239 LOCKE LANE



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**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
VIRGIL AND DORIS CHILDRESS HOUSE  
3239 LOCKE LANE

